

Leisure in the City: The Entertainment Sector in the Manchester Central Business District 1770-1930

N. Burton

From the dawn of urban time cities have been places of leisure: they provided recreation, entertainment and culture among their primary functions. The new industrial cities of the 19th century were no exception. Indeed, the leisure tastes of the transitional societies they housed were omnivorous, and so the broadest range of recreational opportunity was provided, from the brutish to the refined, from cock-fighting to concerts. In Manchester, the over-grown market town of the late 18th century, the primitive leisure facilities were well dispersed, but as the provision of recreation became more diverse and sophisticated, so the main facilities tended to concentrate into a leisure sector of the emerging Central Business District. Incipiently developed by 1850, this leisure sector became much firmer in definition by 1900, but after the 1930s it slid into decline as recreational tastes changed and facilities decentralised into the extending suburbs. This paper traces the progress of the evolution of the leisure sector of the Manchester CBD and examines the processes that shaped its early growth and later dispersal.

Though the study is concerned with the whole spectrum of leisure activity there is a particular emphasis on the popular entertainments, since it was theatres, music halls and cinemas that tended to be the major components of the CBD leisure sector at different periods of time. The way leisure adapted to the new urban centres in the 19th century, with their constrictions on open space and limits on available free time for industrial workers, is a central concern of this study. It will examine how traditional leisures adapted to the new industrial cities of the past and how leisure changed as these cities developed. Since Britain became the first industrial nation these cities had to pioneer leisure facilities to fit the new urban form and evolving social needs. Thus, the history of leisure opportunities in the city is one which reflects the deeper changes in society: the transitions from a pre-industrial society to an industrial society, from an early industrial society to a late industrial society, and a late industrial society to a 'modern' post-industrial society have all marked major phases in the development of leisure. The nature and location of leisure facilities has changed through time, as the pattern of space use in the CBD has itself evolved.

Manchester is in many ways the ideal choice for this type of study, for it was the symbol of the Victorian age — the age which saw the birth of 'modern' industrial society. As the prototype industrial city Manchester experienced the early development of a CBD, a central core of commercial activity being already established with a coherent structure by 1850. Manchester also pioneered many urban facilities (for example, in health and education provision) and these included many early cultural and recreational developments such as libraries and public parks. Manchester also has the advantages of being a well-documented and manageable study area: it is not too big to study and its leisure and entertainment infrastructure is relatively small when compared with that of London. Manchester is well-documented, with a large number of accessible trade directories, maps, newspapers, and local guidebooks revealing a detailed picture of life in the city in the past.

Four main sources of evidence were used closely linked together in the compilation of this paper: official directories, maps, newspapers, and books about Manchester. The information from these was used to conduct a survey of leisure in the city at different periods of time. Four surveys were made covering the period 1750-1930, and each consists of complete list of the entertainments and leisure facilities in the city centre at that particular time, presented in both map and textual form. Surveys were conducted for the following four approximate dates — 1790, 1850, 1890 and 1930 — broadly at forty years intervals.

The directories were used to help list and locate facilities found in the town/city for these dates, and this information was placed on a map of that period (though the maps and the directories used in close collaboration often did not have precisely the same dates). The more detailed Ordnance Survey maps themselves revealed much information on where formal leisure facilities were located. Local guidebooks to Manchester were important in giving more adequate information on the leisure opportunities in Manchester and helped in the precise dating of major leisure developments. Early newspapers were particularly helpful in the survey of leisure in late 18th century Manchester, when directories were rather limited in their scope. It has to be said that the surveys of leisure, phase by phase, do not include every single activity in the town/city centre — many activities were informal and temporary, for example, street entertainers, travelling circuses, and informal street games. Problems of demarcation constantly arise. Most libraries existed for leisure purposes, but some were professional or technical. Baths were built both for recreational and sanitary purposes. Some buildings, like the Free Trade Hall, had political and social as well as recreational functions. Leisure, as a set of activities, is not easily defined against other facets of the city's life.

Primitive recreation in the 18th century town

Manchester was undergoing great change in the 18th century. Increasing trade, prosperity, and population growth led to changes in the essentially Medieval and Elizabethan town, a town which was dominated by an old network of narrow alleys, passages and lanes centred on the ancient nucleus of the Market Place and Market Street Lane. In the late 18th century Manchester was transformed by the Industrial Revolution into a large and prosperous town, which experienced rapid population growth — from approximately 10,000 inhabitants in 1717 to 70,000 in 1801, 84,000 including nearby Salford. Manchester was in transition; despite the new public and commercial buildings, the new factories, streets and houses, it was still essentially a 'pre-industrial' town. This section is a survey of leisure in Manchester around 1790, though sources of varying dates are used. New wider and more regular roads and squares surrounded the ancient nucleus of the town which was centred on the main thoroughfares of Market Street Lane, Deansgate and King Street, and new public buildings were erected on the edges of the old centre. For this survey Charles Laurent's plan of Manchester and Salford in 1793 is used as the base map for it reveals much detailed information. Directory evidence was used with the map — particularly Elizabeth Raffald's first Manchester directory of 1772; information on less formal entertainments in the town were obtained through early newspapers — the 'Manchester Magazine' and the 'Manchester Mercury'.

Leisure, like the town itself, was in transition. Old pastimes survived alongside new. Horse-racing events took place just a few miles outside the town at Kersal

Moor, to the north-west of Manchester, which was mentioned as a racing site as early as 1687, but annual horse races began here in 1730. Cock-fighting was a traditional and popular sport in the town and had many sites. A 1650 plan of Manchester illustrates a cock pit at its centre. Other cock-fighting sites existed in the town in the late 18th century — the Exchange building and the Marsden Street Theatre staged many fights, in 1760 a new cock pit was established at the upper end of Deansgate and in Salford one cock pit was located on Water Street. New popular facilities emerged. Manchester's first pleasure gardens were opened in 1796 by John Tinker in the Collyhurst area of town, just north of the town centre. The gardens were located in the Irk Valley and entertainments here included roundabouts and swings, brass band concerts, and often firework and balloon displays. They later became known as the Vauxhall Gardens and continued until 1851. Two semi-permanent circuses also existed in Manchester in the 1790s. Astley's Circus was established in 1787 linked to a riding-house in Tib Street (near the Infirmary). Astley's Circus was known for its equestrian displays. A second circus was Mr Handy's circus hall built in 1793 in Chatham Street (near Piccadilly) which was demolished in 1808.

Most leisure 'facilities' were situated in the traditional nucleus of the town surrounding the Market Place and alongside Market Street Lane. Many had existed for very long, such as the annual Acres Field Fair, sites for cock-fighting, and also the numerous inns and taverns of the town. As new leisure developments emerged in the later 18th century such as a theatre and concert rooms these were located further away from the Market Place.

The 'Acres Fair' was, perhaps, the oldest site of recreation in the town, though this was only an annual celebration, providing a chance for much festivity amongst the townsfolk. Originally a trading fair was established in the 13th century (1222-1227) on the site of Acres Field. The fair was characterized by informal festivities and it was Manchester's main annual celebration for centuries. Other annual festivities in the town included the later Knott Mill fair which began in the 1860s as a celebration of the creation of the Bridgewater Canal. Major festivities also occurred during the annual holiday period of Whit-week, a religious celebration and the time when Manchester came alive with entertainments such as Punch and Judy, freak shows and popular games. The Kersal Moor horse races also took place during Whit-week in the late 18th century.

The fairs, the cock-fighting and the horse-racing were all popular leisures of pre-industrial Manchester and they survived in the 1790s at a time when the town was undergoing a rapid industrial transformation. The numerous pubs, inns and taverns were also very important components of pre-industrial leisure, in fact they were the most important. They were the traditional centres for entertainment in the town and each pub had its own history and its own activities. Although scattered throughout the town the pubs were particularly concentrated on the main thoroughfares. The pubs were the main focus of leisure activity in 18th century Manchester, even if it was just in providing the simple pleasures of drink and social intercourse. As James Walvin notes, many recreations and pleasures originated and were organised through the pubs and they provided drink, food, company, warmth, gambling and games (Walvin, 1978). There was certainly no shortage of these facilities in late 18th century Manchester: from Raffald's 1772 directory of Manchester and Salford the number of pubs in the town totals 131, with about a third of them in the medieval nucleus. In the period before the appearance of Manchester's early theatres pubs

with a central location provided the facilities for visiting entertainments, concerts and society meetings. Two important ones were the Angel Inn and the Bull's Head Inn, both in the Market Place and both providing large rooms for meetings and exhibitions. The 'Manchester Mercury' had weekly notices for forthcoming debates held by the Conversation Society at the Angel Inn in the 1770's. Many events were held at the Bull's Head Inn and it was here that tickets were sold for forthcoming events in the Exchange building such as the quarterly subscription concerts (noted in the 'Manchester Magazine' in the 1750s). The Angel Inn and the Bull's Head Inn were far from being the only inns which provided entertainments, but they were situated in the focal point of the town. Other inns often held events, for example the 'Grand Cassowar' — a freak bird from the island of Java on display at the King's Arms. Such exhibitions were not uncommon in the pubs of 18th century Manchester. The erection of the first Exchange building in 1729 with its space for exhibitions and concerts took many of the formal entertainments away from the traditional pubs, though events at the Exchange were only occasional and were rather limited. Pub activities were much more common and certainly more various.

Raffald's 1772 directory only notes two coffee houses in Manchester — the Old Coffee House and Crompton's Coffee House, both situated next to the Exchange. These two coffee houses were themselves a well-established part of community life in Manchester, being popular meeting places. The Old Coffee House also sold tickets for events at the Exchange and the Theatre. Raffald also notes Shaw's Punch House in Shambles Square, but there were few other places to eat and drink apart from the pubs. Raffald's directory also notes that there were very few libraries in the Manchester of 1772 though at least two did exist. The famous Chetham's College Library began as early as 1656. Also a subscription library was set up in the Exchange in the 1760s and lasted many years. But libraries were not an important component of leisure in Manchester in the 1790s, though the number increased rapidly through the latter years of the 18th century as the town's population grew.

As well as those traditional leisures which existed in Manchester during this period there were also several new developments, particularly after 1750. One important development was the building of the Exchange in 1729 which was, in a way, the town's first public facility for exhibitions and events. Though its main function was not for leisure purposes its upper floor was utilised for a variety of events: these ranged from subscription concerts and displays of rare exhibits to cock-fighting and performances by travelling acting companies. Some playbills exist for early play performances at the Exchange in the 1740s (Hodgkinson and Pogson, 1960). The Exchange was located on Market Street Lane in the centre of the town and was the focus for the town's formal entertainments in the mid-18th century, but in the later years of the century it declined in importance as new facilities were built. It was finally demolished in 1792 and a new Exchange built.

A number of leisure developments came after 1750 and most were in a location away from the traditional Market Place, for example, the Marsden Street Theatre, the Theatre Royal, the Concert Rooms and the Assembly Rooms. Most of these were located in the King Street/Fountain Street area of town, slightly away from the old Exchange area. The first permanent theatre in the town was built at the upper end of King Street around 1753 and though its exact location cannot be certainly identified evidence suggests it was located at the junction of Marsden Street and Brown Street. Raffald's 1772 directory and the 'Manchester Mercury' simply refer to

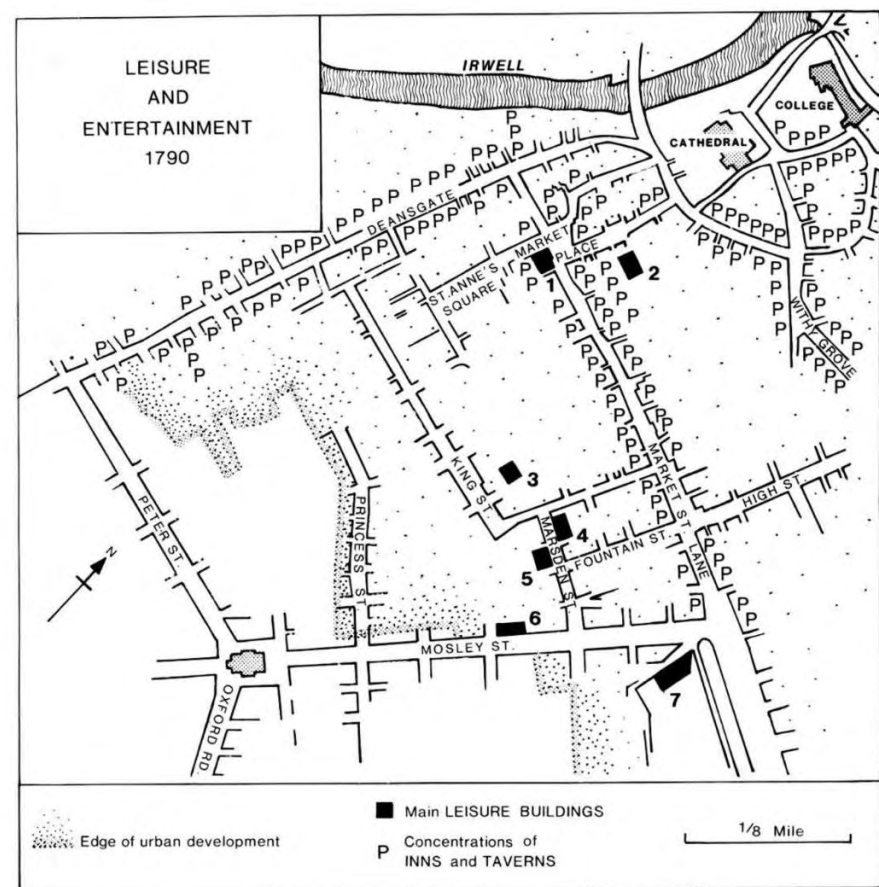


Figure 1: Leisure and Entertainment, 1790

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Exchange | 3. The first theatre | 5. Concert Rooms |
| 2. Angel and Bull's Head Inns | 4. The Theatre Royal | 6. Assembly Rooms |
| | | 7. Public Baths |

this as 'the Theatre' and the latter had regular weekly notices for plays there. J.L. Hodgkinson has outlined the history of this 'Marsden Street' Theatre, noting that it probably incorporated a tavern and an upper assembly room, and was used also for cock-fighting. After little success the theatre closed in 1775 (Hogkinson and Pogson, 1860).

The year 1775 also saw the opening of a new theatre near the old one, the Theatre Royal which opened at the corner of York Street and Spring Gardens. Like Manchester's first theatre this was still located in the main built-up area of the town, but was slightly removed from the town's main routeways. The Theatre Royal staged many prestigious plays and musical pieces and remained Manchester's only playhouse for the rest of the 18th century. The next leisure development in this area

was the building of Concert Rooms in Fountain Street (opposite the Theatre Royal). The Concert Rooms were built in 1775 for the Gentlemen's Concert club, a club founded in 1770 which had previously met in a Market Place tavern. The concerts were now allowed to continue on a regular basis in a new elegant and spacious building. Concerts were to continue here for over fifty years. The presence of the Theatre and the Concert Rooms in the Fountain Street area symbolised a shift of entertainment facilities away from the Market Place and the old Exchange building. One local commentator has noted that Fountain Street became, "absorbed by theatricals and music" (Procter, 1880). This new entertainment 'enclave' was further intensified with the opening of large Assembly Rooms on Mosley Street in 1792. These club rooms were set up by gentlemen's subscriptions and they housed many facilities — such as a ballroom, tea room, a billiard room and card rooms.

Thus, it seems that in the 18th century both Manchester and its leisure were in transition. Manchester was still a small town and most leisure opportunities essentially belonged to a pre-industrial age. Sports were popular, particularly those which enable gambling such as horse-racing and cock-fighting (and even bear-baiting!). Horse racing could only take place on extensive sites outside the urban area (such as Kersal Moor), but cock-fighting could easily adapt to the urban environment for it used up only a small amount of space. Both the gentlemen and the common folk of the town could enjoy sports. Fairs and religious festivities were also a legacy of the pre-industrial age and these continued in the urban area utilising existing open spaces; pubs, inns and taverns of course had very few problems in adapting to the new urban environment. The new leisure facilities developed in Manchester in the latter 18th century were in fact its earliest examples of 'true' urban leisure facilities, for they were the outcome of the demands of a small number of privileged townfolk who wanted to spend their free time (which was often plentiful) being entertained by fashionable pursuits. The new facilities were few in number, but they had a major impact. Buildings such as the Theatre Royal and the Concert Rooms were facilities created for the leisured classes, the gentry and ladies of the town, and they had little appeal for the majority of the townfolk. The common citizen of Manchester probably relied on the traditional games and the pub for his enjoyment, though new opportunities for leisure were presented in the 1790s with the opening of Tinker's pleasure gardens and also two new circus halls.

Clearly, no leisure sector, yet, existed in Manchester in the 18th century — the town was small and relatively undifferentiated in terms of land-use function. Pubs were scattered throughout the town, but the main focus of all activity, including leisure activity, was the traditional Market Place. However, by the 1790s a small group of buildings used for leisure purposes had developed away from the Market Place, clustered around Fountain Street and York Street. These were facilities used by the same people, mainly the gentlemen of the town, who may have had their residences nearby. In this period before suburban growth many fine houses were located in streets such as Mosley Street and it is not surprising then that Assembly Rooms were set up there. The whole area around Fountain Street was a more 'select' part of town, away from the hustle and bustle of the Market Place. We may note that the 'Manchester Mercury' of January 1762 notes a performance at the Theatre on Marsden Street describing the location of the playhouse, "At the upper end of King Street, remarkable for its fine air and retired situation." This was a respectable and elegant part of town, a factor which may have been an influence on leisure development in this area. A leisure 'enclave' was being created, each new development marking an increasing shift away from the Market Place.

Victorian sophistication: leisure around 1850

By 1850, the old, overgrown, industrialising market town had become the new city of 303,000, set at the heart of an incipient conurbation of which the total population had already passed the million mark. Immense success in both industry and commerce had generated great wealth, which filtered down the social scale to a strong and prosperous middle class with the income to demand new recreations and the ambition to imitate the gentry. Public transport had begun to develop with a system of horse-bus routes that served the entire urban area and the first of the high-speed suburban rail services. Urban culture and entertainment were now much more accessible to a far greater population, and the leisure sector of the city's economy was able to grow to serve a new and larger market. Perhaps the salient feature of leisure life of the city about 1850 was that it reflected the deep divisions in a class-structured society. The simple pastimes of the common man continued, provided by pubs, fairs and the like; but at the opposite pole, Manchester's emergent middle class demanded access to music, theatres and the fine arts. All these tastes, simple and refined, were provided for in the city at mid-century; and increasingly a single well-defined sector of the city core dominated the leisure scene, but never completely.

Many general leisure facilities were dispersed throughout the city though in most cases more than half the total number of each facility was found in the central area. In particular, public baths, temperance hotels, libraries, billiard rooms and above all pubs were not unique to the city centre, but tea/coffee/dining rooms and clubs were more concentrated in the centre and found less in the outer areas of the city. All these facilities increased in number during the early 19th century and as the town grew, so they became dispersed outwards into the new suburbs, such as Hulme, Chorlton-on-Medlock and Ancoats. Also, and perhaps surprisingly, libraries were found in the suburbs (though they tended to be very small). The few gentlemen's clubs found in Manchester in 1850 also favoured central locations. Two were on Mosley Street — the Mosley Street Club (1872) in the Assembly Rooms and the Union Club (1825), a third was the Albion Club (1837) which was located in King Street.

Of the forty-five libraries in Manchester in 1850 over half were found in the central area. Libraries varied greatly — public, circulating, subscription, and specialist libraries existed, with all the major ones being found in the evolving CBD. Some of the libraries in Manchester were old, for example, Chetham's and the old subscription library in the Exchange. New libraries flourished, among which, the chief circulating library was the Portico on Mosley Street. Libraries and reading rooms were also incorporated into the fine gentlemen's institutions, such as the Athenaeum and the Royal Manchester Institution, as well as in the Mechanic's Institutes. Suburban libraries also existed — there were over six circulating libraries, in Hulme and in the districts of Strangeways, Rusholme and Pendleton. It was not until the 1850 Public Libraries Act that Manchester obtained its first free library supported by the rates: this was housed in the Hall of Science, Campfield, and it opened in 1852.

Unlike libraries some leisure facilities were unique to the city centre. Many of the public buildings and gentlemen's institutions have already been mentioned and these developed as social activity increased in the city, as meeting places for both gentlemen and working men. Two of the earliest were the Assembly Rooms and the

Literary and Philosophical Society, both established in the late 18th century, though the 'Lit and Phil' did not obtain its George Street premises until 1804. The early 19th century saw new developments: the Royal Manchester Institution (the R.M.I.) was set up for, "the encouragement of the fine arts." This was a meeting place for societies and also initiated annual art exhibitions, which were also held at a temporary gallery in the Newall's Buildings in Market Street during the 1830s. At the rear of the R.M.I. was the Athenaeum, with its entrance on Bond Street. This was a well-known meeting place for the businessmen of the city, and opened in 1839, only to subscribing members. The Athenaeum aimed to achieve, "the advancement and diffusion of knowledge." (Heywood 1903). The Athenaeum housed a library, reading rooms, a lecture theatre and club rooms. It was a middle-class club, famous for its 'soirees' (lectures followed by a ball), some of which were attended by Charles Dickens in the 1840s.

Institutions concerned with the advancement of knowledge in the lower classes also sprang up in the early 19th century: there were Mechanic's Institutes in Manchester, Salford, and the nearby suburbs of Miles Platting and Crumpsall; there were also Lycaeums (similar to the Mechanic's Institutes) in Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock.

Two other public institutions were established on Peter Street during the early 19th century: the Natural History Museum was opened by the Natural History Society in 1835 and nearby the famous Free Trade Hall began life as a large marquee in 1840, then as a temporary wooden structure in 1843 (until 1856 when the present-day structure was built), as a meeting place for the Anti-Corn Law League. In the latter half of the 19th century the Free Trade Hall became the home of the renowned Halle Orchestra.

Manchester by 1850 had developed new urban amenities concerned with educating and relaxing the minds of its citizens, though particularly its more prosperous citizens. Similarly, in terms of formal entertainments Manchester continued to develop an infrastructure of theatres, though many of them had short histories. In 1850, only two theatres existed: the Queen's Theatre in Spring Gardens and the Theatre Royal in Peter Square. Other theatres had existed in early Victorian Manchester: the second Theatre Royal opened on Fountain Street in 1807, but was burnt down in a fire in 1844; two minor theatres used for less formal performances were the Olympic Theatre (1838-1841) in Stevenson Square and Cooke's Amphitheatre (or Cooke's Circus) in Mount Street, which was used for equestrian shows between 1844 and 1850. Manchester's theatre history between 1800 and 1850 clearly illustrates the dynamics of urban change in an evolving CBD: three theatres opened and closed in different parts of the town, one theatre surviving only a few years.

The Manchester of 1850 offered a variety of musical tastes. The Gentlemen's Concerts established in Manchester in the 1770s also continued, but they now took place at a new site. The former Fountain Street site was replaced by a new concert hall built in 1831 at the junction of Peter Street and Lower Mosley Street. It was here that Charles Halle became conductor in 1849 and began his musical association with the city. A second concert hall was built adjacent to this in 1853, the Casino (which later became known as the People's Concert Hall). This second concert hall provided quality variety entertainment, unlike its neighbours which provided more formal concerts. It is noticeable that the two concert halls are located next to each other, and close to the Theatre Royal and the site of Cooke's Amphitheatre in the Peter Street area. They formed the first small cluster of 'entertainment' buildings in the city: this was a new focus for entertainment and marked a shift from the old Fountain Street 'axis' noted in the 1790 survey. The Peter Street area was now the centre for more impressive leisure developments, further away from the town centre.

Indeed, leisure was beginning to be suburbanised, as new recreational opportunities were provided by the new parks and pleasure gardens. These were virtually absent from central Manchester in 1850, basically because this area was by now intensively built up with little space or cheap land for extensive recreational facilities. The parks and pleasure gardens were located in the older suburbs, such as Bradford, Harpurhey, Collyhurst, Gorton and Old Trafford. The pleasure gardens were a popular leisure form and most were located along the main roads out of the

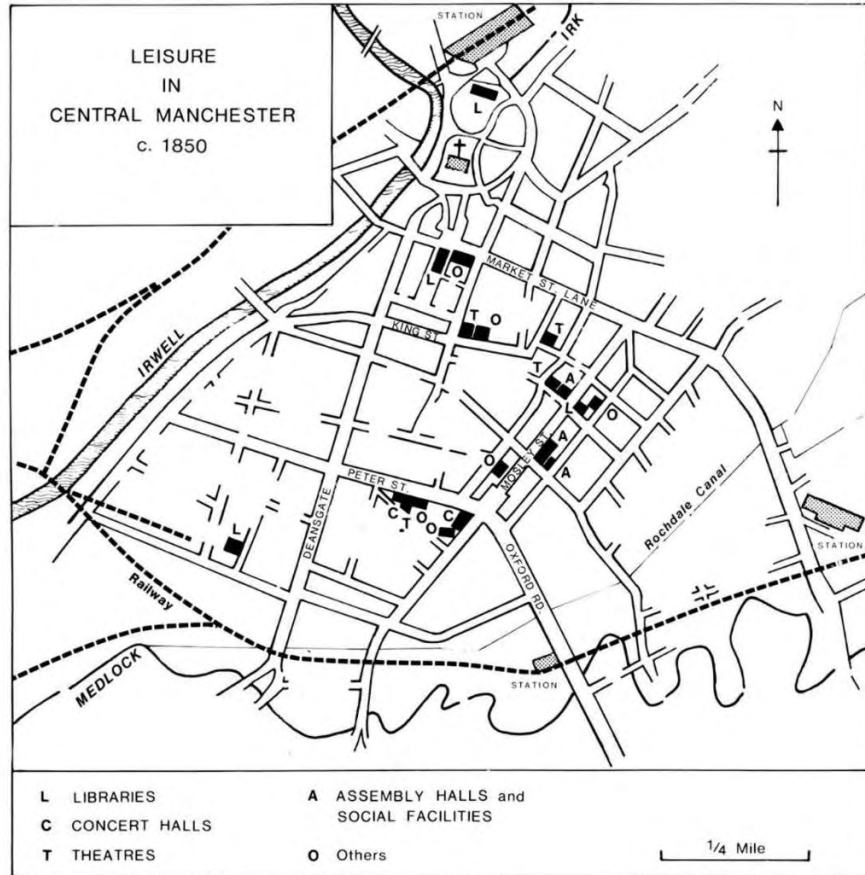


Figure 2: Leisure in Central Manchester c. 1850

city centre. Increasing sports activity, too, meant the utilisation of open sites on the edge of the built-up area. By 1850, there was clear evidence (from Slater's Directory and the invaluable O.S. 60" plans) that a leisure sector had emerged and was rapidly evolving on the south-west fringes of the CBD. This evidence has been analysed in fine detail, on a street-by-street basis. It shows that Mosley Street was the main axis for recreation and entertainment and only here was leisure yet a dominating land use. Here were the impressive buildings of the Athenaeum, the R.M.I., the Portico Library, several clubs, and two concert halls. Leisure, as a land use, had spread westwards along Mosley Street and by 1850, the major new developments were at and near its junction with Peter Street and Oxford Street.

The Peter Street map reveals that this was mainly a centre for small businesses in 1850, such as pawnbrokers and tobacconists, in very small shop units. Industry also tended to be small-scale here, such as nail-making and wire-working. There were some warehouses, but these were not very large and it was the leisure facilities that took up a greater amount of space. There were also some impressive ecclesiastical buildings on Peter Street, and the evolving leisure infrastructure also included some places to eat and drink: Slater's 1850 directory notes a number of beer retailers, a coffee house and oyster rooms.

Oxford Street was dominated by industry and commerce in 1850 with very few important leisure facilities, only two pubs, two beer retailers and one public baths. Industry covered by far the largest area, with the canal and the railway nearby, and included a saw mill, a stone masons and a distillery, as well as some engineering works. Small businesses included booksellers and stationers, and these were mainly found near St Peter's Square, and here two private residences also survived.

Looking at the overall pattern, it must be said that in 1850, this was still an area of mixed land-uses — shops, merchant houses, large and small works, warehouses and a few offices were interspersed with several large public buildings devoted to leisure, social and cultural uses, which tended increasingly to dominate the street scene. To the total of fifteen leisure facilities on Mosley Street and Peter Street in 1850, could be added those facilities nearby — the Athenaeum, the "Lit and Phil," the Mechanic's Institute and the Casino concert hall. Thus, including Oxford Street, there were nearly twenty-five leisure facilities in this compact area of central Manchester, ranging from the elegant theatre and concert halls and prestigious club rooms to the informal pubs, beer retailers and coffee houses. By 1850, then, a limited leisure 'sector' had evolved in this part of central Manchester.

How did this leisure sector evolve? It was essentially a 19th century phenomenon as the evidence shows, developing in the early 19th century and already recognisable by 1850. The 1790 survey revealed that streets such as Peter Street were very much on the periphery of the 18th century town and no leisure facilities were found here until the early 19th century. It is interesting to note how leisure facilities tended to develop outwards along Mosley Street from the late 18th century nucleus of Fountain Street: the Assembly Rooms, the Portico Library and the 'Lit and Phil' all developed between 1790-1810 and were found at the Piccadilly end of Mosley Street. Further down Mosley Street, the R.M.I., Union Club, Mechanic's Institute and the Athenaeum all developed later between 1820-1840. On Peter Street, developments all occurred after 1830 with the Museum, Theatre Royal and Free Trade Hall, all built between 1835-1845. There seemed to be a movement out of the old town centre

to the newer streets (built in the late 18th century) on the edge of the old town. One could say that a leisure sector really emerged in an early form between the years 1820-1850, when eight new impressive buildings were erected along Mosley Street and Peter Street, many of which still survive today.

Comparing this area with the same area in 1790, one can only describe the difference as a transformation on a grand scale. The open spaces and private houses of the past were built upon and replaced as Manchester expanded, and this area in less than fifty years became the main axis for leisure in the city. It is different to find exact reasons, but one can, perhaps, speculate on several factors which may have helped shape the 'leisure quarter'. Mosley Street and Peter Street may have been attractive to leisure entrepreneurs for several reasons. Firstly, since they were fairly new streets they had available space, and many of the new buildings required large plots. In the older part of the town, space was limited and costs may well have been too high, particularly since leisure would have to compete with commercial land-uses on central streets such as Market Street and King Street. Secondly, leisure may have developed along Mosley Street and Peter Street because they were already areas of respectability and prestige, select and exclusive residential areas with high-income housing. Facilities which provided the city's gentlemen with their exclusive recreations were well located here, even though the process of suburbanisation was already evident by 1850, the gentlemen with their fine houses in suburbs to the south of the city centre had easy access to Mosley Street, via Oxford Road. The exclusive clubs and meetings rooms required a central location, as B. Love, notes, "Many gentlemen who have been compelled, by the encroachment of commercial buildings, to take up their abode in the country doubtless appreciate the comforts of an establishment in town enjoying all the exclusiveness."

The clubs, libraries and meeting rooms in the Mosley Street area must also have benefited from their close proximity to each other, located in an elegant and handsome area, together they generated a clustering tendency, which spread to nearby Peter Street. Here, the Gentlemen's Concert Hall was built on the site of Mr Cooper's cottage, while the Free Trade Hall became sited here, because it was an important and political site, on the field where the famous 'Peterloo Massacre' took place in 1819. The Theatre Royal obviously benefited from its location adjacent to the Free Trade Hall and the Museum, which attracted the same leisure-seekers. The two concert halls were also located next to each other on a highly accessible site, particularly from the suburbs to the south, such as Rusholme and Fallowfield. This easy access from the south may have been the main reason why Oxford Street was to become a focus for leisure development in future years.

Fin de Siecle: entertainment in the not-so-naughty nineties

If the 1850s saw the establishment of a distinct sector of the CBD increasingly devoted to the people's pleasures, the nineties witnessed the results of a great broadening of the city's leisure resources coupled with a consolidation and enlargement of the sector of the urban core that housed them. Some leisure-time facilities continued to disperse into outlying locations: pubs of course, followed housing expansion, so that most artisan areas — Hulme, Ancoats, Salford, for example — were richly endowed. Music Halls, too, were to develop close to their clientele, for example, in Ardwick and Hulme. Libraries, too, dispersed into the true suburbs, now 3 or 4 miles from the city, especially as free public libraries developed. But the

main mass of the entertainment industry (for such it now was) remained rooted in the centre in an increasingly sharply defined enclave. Much of the pre-1850 development had been rather patrician in its appeal, the clubs, concert halls, assembly rooms and galleries. But the period 1850-1890 saw a great surge in popular entertainment, of which the chief symbols were the music hall and variety theatre. New themes developed in the provision of leisure for the mass of the population. Political clubs emerged on a significant scale (there were 76 by 1890) and these not only had a strong social function, but also attracted a broad spectrum of society. There was a sustained attempt, too, to wean the common people away from the evils of drink through the growth of the temperance movement. By 1890, there were 47 temperance halls, but they competed with 623 pubs, supplemented by 16 Working Mens Clubs. A major change had been the provision of parks of which there were 11 in Manchester and Salford. Sports were becoming organised through clubs and commercial ventures like the new Salford race-course. The 'City' and 'United' had their origins in the West Gorton and Newton Heath football clubs.

Much was changing, but traditional facilities continued. The number of gentlemen's clubs increased, almost all in central locations. Clubs such as the Gentlemen's Glee Club in Piccadilly and the Union Club in Mosley Street continued to exist, and others appeared, like the Brasenose and Clarendon Clubs in the 1860s and the Reform Club in King Street. The locations of the new clubs confirm the importance of the Mosley Street area — the Clarendon Club (1869) was sited here, the Anglo-French Club in St Peter's Square, and the Freemasons Club in nearby Cooper Street. Thus, clubs in the centre had concentrated particularly on Mosley Street since the beginning of the 19th century. The gentlemen of the city had created their own form of 'clubland'.

The latter half of the 19th century saw many new and interesting leisure developments, though there was continuity as well as change. If the public buildings with leisure connections are examined, it may be seen that some of them had existed in 1850 — the Athenaeum, the Free Trade Hall and the meeting place of the Literary and Philosophical Society. Thus, Mosley Street and Peter Street maintained their leisure connections. New developments after 1850 also tended to occur in these areas: two new meeting halls were built — the Memorial Hall in Albert Square and the St. James's Exhibition Hall in Oxford Street. The latter was an important leisure centre, for not only was it connected with an adjacent theatre, it was also the home of an important school of dancing, and had the attraction of a large 'big wheel' which protruded from the roof (Knowlson, 1884). On Peter Street the Y.M.C.A. obtained a new site (formerly that of the Museum), a prestigious location next to the Free Trade Hall and Theatre Royal, and it housed many sports clubs and leisure activities. Another noticeable development was the founding of the City Art Gallery in 1882, in the R.M.I. building on Mosley Street.

To turn to places of entertainment in central Manchester, it must be said that this was a 'boom' period for the theatre and the music hall. It was during the late 19th century that many of Manchester's most famous palaces of entertainment were established. In the 1850s, Manchester had only two permanent theatres (the Theatre Royal and the Queen's, but around 1890, it could boast a total of eight. The history of Manchester's theatres and music halls in the latter 19th century is a complex but interesting one and can only be outlined here.

The first theatre to be built after 1850 was the Prince's Theatre at the top of Oxford Street which opened in 1864. This was Oxford Street's first main leisure development and the theatre became famous for its musicals and visits by travelling European companies. In 1865, the first formal music hall on Peter Street opened on a small site next to the Free Trade hall; this was the Alexandra Theatre (later the Folly Theatre) converted from the old Ebenezer Methodist Chapel: one of the bars in the Folly was converted from the chapel's old Sunday School, a strange fate. The Folly gives one good example of how leisure land-use was displacing other uses in this area. The music hall had live variety acts and its facilities also included a billiards room. The Folly Theatre was to change its name once more before the end of the century to the Tivoli in 1897.

Other 'respectable' theatres opened in the 1870s and 1880s, the old Queen's Theatre in Spring Gardens closed in 1869, but was replaced by a new Queen's in 1870 on Bridge Street (near Deansgate). This was built on the former site of the London

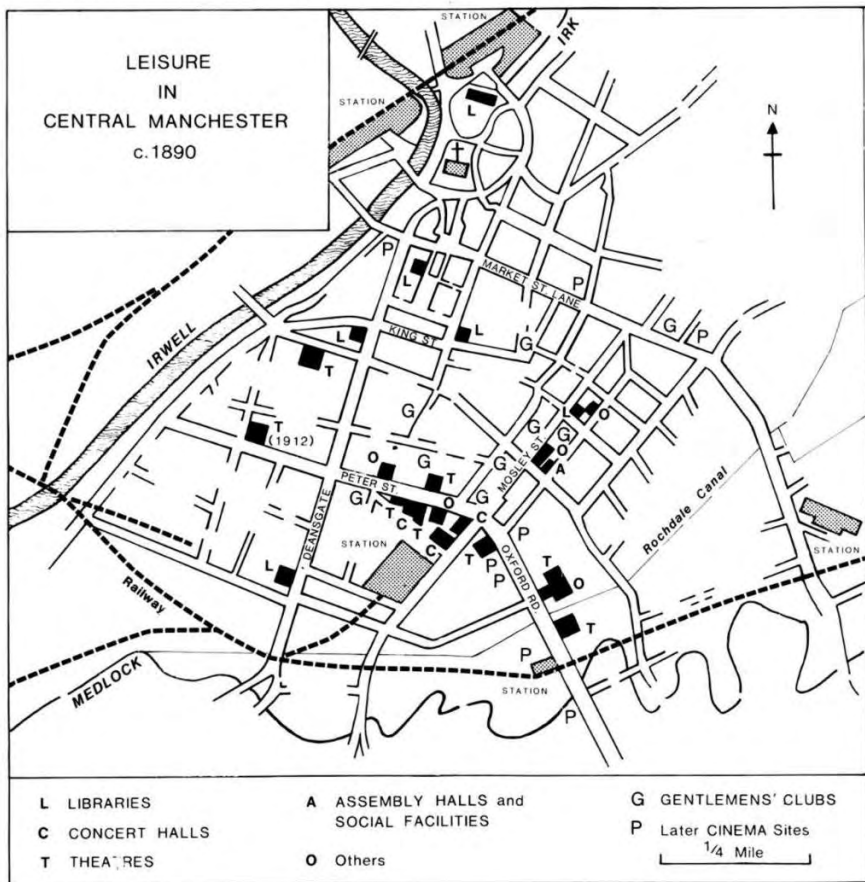


Figure 3: Leisure in Central Manchester c. 1890

Music Hall of 1862, and so illustrates how original 'leisure' sites often continued to exist through adaptation by new leisure uses. The new Queen's was famous for its Shakespeare revivals. The 1880s saw two new theatre developments on Peter Street and Oxford Street: on Peter Street the Comedy was built opposite the Y.M.C.A. after a fire had burnt down an earlier theatre building on this site. The Comedy later changed its name to the Gaiety (from 1903) and in the early decades of the 20th century this playhouse became the home of Manchester's repertory theatre under the leadership of Miss Annie Horniman. On Oxford Street a second theatre opened in 1884, next to the St. James's Hall, this was the St. James's which had closed by 1907 due to its often unsuccessful melodramatic productions.

As well as the Folly, two other music hall theatres opened during this period: on Peter Street, a building which was used for circus spectacles opened in 1883: known simply as the Circus, it was famous for its water spectacles. In 1892, this building became a second-rate music hall known as the Grand Theatre of Varieties (Knowlson, 1984). A more prestigious variety theatre had opened in 1891 on Oxford Street; this was the Palace Theatre of Varieties, an ornate entertainment palace, at the junction of Whitworth Street. Until World War One the Palace was the home of the best variety acts in the city.

In terms of location, Mosley Street was still the focus for social and cultural institutions, but by 1890 Mosley Street and its elegant buildings were overshadowed by a new 'entertainment' axis on Peter Street and Oxford Street. Peter Street housed two theatres and two music halls, with two concert halls nearby. Oxford Street had two theatres and one music hall.

Thus, in the latter half of the 19th century, Oxford Street became a part of the city's evolving leisure sector. The only theatre not located along this axis was the new Queen's on Bridge Street.

The more traditional musical entertainments found in numerous pubs and taverns in the city were difficult to locate. These less formal, more intimate music halls continued to exist side by side with the new variety theatres for a number of years, and they were more numerous. The roots of the music hall date back to the 1830s and 1840s, when many enterprising publicans began to provide entertainments on their premises to obtain more revenue from the sale of food and drink. The increasing number of working people seeking pleasure in the new urban centres led to the pub entertainments becoming increasingly popular during the course of the 19th century. Many larger pubs had 'music halls' and 'singing saloons' attached to their premises and the provision of these entertainments became increasingly commercialised (Poole, 1982). In Manchester, little evidence could be found relating to the early music halls, though one book notes that there were six 'singing saloons' on one street in Ancoats as early as 1834 (Bailey, 1978); another source notes that there were eight music halls in Manchester in 1868 (Harrison, 1973). The growing popularity and commercialisation of this type of entertainment led to the building of the many large ornate music hall theatres, of which the Palace is the best example. It was these variety theatres which had the greatest impact in geographical terms, for in Manchester in the late 19th century they were major components of the CBD leisure sector. Five music hall theatres were noted in the city in the early 1890s and all were located along either Peter Street or Oxford Street.

It has been shown that the roots of the leisure axis date back to the early 19th century when new prestigious public buildings were sited on the periphery of the old town, often where there was vacant land or close proximity to the homes of the town's gentlemen. Leisure facilities may have clustered for various reasons: a group of prestigious buildings was more noticeable than one in isolation, the theatres and clubs often attracted the same people, and there was an element of competition between the individual theatres and music halls. Whatever the reasons, leisure facilities did become organised into a cluster, and this was already recognisable by 1850. The sector expanded, but became more concentrated in the latter half of the 19th century, in a self-sustaining process. Even by 1850, this area had become associated with leisure in the city. It was the place where Manchester pleasure-seekers were to be found, and by the end of the 19th century Peter Street had earned the reputation of being 'Theatre Street'. Therefore, all the theatres in the city desired a location here. Oxford Street may well have developed as a 'spillover' from Peter Street.

Approximately eleven main leisure developments took place on this axis between 1850 and 1891. Nine of these took place between the years 1864 and 1884, a short period of only twenty years which saw the expansion of the leisure axis. The majority of the new development were on Peter Street: here two music halls were established and a new playhouse, and the Y.M.C.A.. Oxford Street also developed very rapidly as part of the evolving leisure sector: here two theatres were established, as well as an exhibition hall and a music hall. Thus, the late 19th century saw a new branch of the leisure axis emerge, creating a sector of leisure facilities which stretched from the Deansgate end of Peter Street southwards to the Rochdale Canal, Whitworth Street and the Oxford Road Station. Mosley Street continued to be an integral part of this leisure axis, forming another branch from St. Peter towards Piccadilly.

The rapid development of Oxford Street in the late 19th century reflects factors of access. As one of the main routes into the city centre from the south, this was a prime site for new leisure developments — south of here, along Oxford Road, were the suburbs of Hulme, Rusholme, Fallowfield and Withington. Oxford Road station brought trains from south Manchester and the suburbs into the city. The Palace was built almost opposite the station, and this must have been an impressive sight for any visitor arriving in the city from here. Oxford Street, however, was still on the edge of the city centre surrounded by industry and some housing. Unlike Mosley Street, there was yet little pressure from commercial land-uses which required a central location. It is noticeable from the map of 1890 that there was a great amount of office development on Mosley Street, and so the number of leisure facilities remained relatively stable.

In 1890 then, Manchester's city centre leisure facilities were closely concentrated in one area. With ten theatres/music halls, the entertainment axis was almost at its peak. The main component of the leisure sector was the theatre — and the theatres ranged from the respectable playhouses, such as the Theatre Royal and the Prince's, to the common music halls, such as the Folly and the Grand. The theatres, therefore, appealed to all classes and there was a considerable choice of entertainment. Over the next thirty years after 1890 theatres were built elsewhere as well as in the city centre: Salford had two by 1895 (the Prince of Wales and the Regent), and suburban theatres developed in the 1900s in districts such as Hulme, Crumpsal, Ardwick, Longsight and Openshaw.

The leisure sector of the south of the CBD of Manchester reached its zenith at the time of the First World War: thereafter, though it attracted new investment in change and development, it declined relatively with an enormous growth of entertainment in the suburbs. During the first quarter of the 20th century, about a dozen theatres and music halls were built in suburban locations, almost all on main radial roads (new tramway routes), about two miles from the city. Most were owned by W H Broadhead, Manchester's leading leisure entrepreneur. Even before this late theatre 'boom' was complete its rival, the cinema, had begun to appear in great numbers. By 1914, there were 79, by 1930, 114, the great majority in out-of-town locations. Though city-centre cinemas appeared, by conversion of theatres and as new buildings, the CBD never dominated the cinema as it had the theatre. It had its prestigious 'first-run' cinemas, but these were by no means confined to the leisure sector on the Oxford Street — Peter Street axis: cinemas were built on the main retail streets (the Deansgate, the Market Street and the Piccadilly) to attract the shopping crowds.

Nevertheless, the leisure axis continued to develop and to adapt itself to new and changing needs, into the 20th century. Two theatres survived (the Princes and the Palace), while a new one was added in Oxford Street, the Hippodrome (1904), but another investment, the Opera House of 1912, was sited on Quay Street. The ornate Midland Hotel, central on the entertainment axis, was itself a major leisure facility and for a time contained a theatre. But other theatres were claimed by the new cinema industry: the Gaiety, the Theatre Royal and the Folly/Tivoli all went this way, as did others, briefly. The St. James Theatre on Oxford Street had a year as a cinema, before being reconstructed as an office block. Two major dance halls, the Ritz and the Plaza, were built on Oxford Street to cater for a new taste, both in 1930. Right up to the Second World War, the traditional leisure axis continued to prosper and develop, but now with Oxford Street totally dominant, and no longer as 'theatreland', but as the prestige cinema strip. The Gaumont and the Paramount (later Odeon) were palatial in scale, the Oxford and Scala more modest. Cafes, restaurants and pubs filled the gaps in the entertainment frontage. The new Central Library (1934) presided over the leisure scene with great dignity (and came to possess its own theatre).

What of the present? Television almost destroyed the leisure axis: all cinemas but the Odeon have closed all theatres but the Palace and the more distant Opera House. The Theatre Royal offers bingo, the Gaumont has become a cluster of bars and a disco. Oxford Street saw its bright lights dimmed and began to wear a threadbare appearance. Yet, such is the persistence of CBD functions in specific locations, that new leisure investment continues to seek out the traditional sites. The Palace has been rebuilt and enlarged, the Midland Hotel gutted and transformed by Holiday Inns. Further south are the Contact Theatre and Royal Northern College of Music concert hall, in the University precinct. The enemy of CBD entertainment has itself entered the axis: both BBC and Granada have their studio complexes along it, at opposite ends. Old facilities continue: the Halle plays in the Free Trade Hall and the Library Theatre prospers. New investments have continued into the 'eighties', notably the conversion of the old Central Station in the GMEX Exhibition Centre and the development of a centre for the visual arts at the Corner House, an old furniture store. In a sense, the old 'axis' survives as strongly as ever, in a new and still

changing form, offering those forms of leisure that modern taste demands.

From this single case study, in which there has been an inevitable concentration on local detail, a number of more general themes and propositions arise in the emergence of leisure provision as a major function of the evolving central business district. There is a clear distinction between the dispersal of some facilities and the concentration of others. Pubs, for example, dispersed with population as the city expanded: they remained a local facility at a community level, though they were always sparse in high status residential areas. Music halls, too, dispersed in their heyday, as did the later cinemas even more universally.

Conversely the 'serious' theatre, concert halls, galleries, clubs and other facilities that combined a taste for cultural with social ambition remained strongly central. They shared a market, were either mutually competitive or inter-dependent, and became clustered more tightly into a compact sector. That sector clung initially to the skirts of the main high-status housing area of the early 19th century. As it shifted, particularly in the second half of the century, access from high-income residential areas remained the key. The main leisure axis of 1890, persisting until the 1960s, was the point of entry to the city centre of Oxford Road, with its extensions southwards the spine of Manchester's high-income communities of the late Victorian period: here too were the stations that brought the outer, railway-based suburbs within half-an-hour of the city.

The great tides of social change that shaped the community of the industrial city found a clear expression in its leisure development. At first, up to about 1770, there was little or no class segregation of leisure provision: the same premises, all clustered around the Market Place, provided for a wide range of recreational taste. But soon, the first purpose-built facilities began to appear, all catering for middle-class social and cultural tastes, and close to the fashionable streets. Thus, the development of an early leisure axis along Mosley Street reflected some segregation of rich from poor in the pursuit of pleasure. But this was to prove transitory. Later in the 19th century, as commercial entertainment created a mass market, Oxford Street — Peter Street came to provide everything from a classical concert to a music hall. By 1914, suburbanisation had replaced social segregation as the dominant force in the shaping of the leisure pattern. Today, perhaps, a different principle of selectivity can be seen: while the mature sit content by their television screens, the young frequent the long established streets of the leisure quarter seeking a new mix of excitements and diversions, but in the same urban territory as their forebears a century or more ago.

References

1. Axon, W. E. A. (1886) *Annals of Manchester*, Manchester
2. Bailey, P. (1978) *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, London.
3. Brindley, W. H. (1929) *The Soul of Manchester*, Manchester.
4. Halliwell, L. (1984) *Seats in All Parts — half a lifetime at the movies*, London.

5. Harrison, B. (1973) In H. J. Dyos & M. Wolff (eds) *The Victorian City — Images and Realities. Vol. 1* London.
6. Hayes, L. M. (1905) *Reminiscences of Manchester from the year 1840*, Manchester.
7. Heywood, A. (1903) *Guide to Manchester and Salford*, Manchester.
8. Hodgkinson, J. L. (1984) *Red Plush and Gilt — the heyday of Manchester theatre during the Victorian and Edwardian periods*, Manchester.
9. Love, B. (1842) *The Handbook of Manchester*, Manchester.
10. Messinger, G. S. (1985) *Manchester in the Victorian Age*, Manchester.
11. Poole, R. (1982) *Popular Leisure and the Music Hall in Nineteenth Century Bolton*, University of Lancaster.
12. Procter, R. W. (1880) *Memorials of Bygone Manchester*, Manchester.
13. Shercliff, W. H. (1983) *Manchester — a short history of its development*, Manchester.
14. Walvin, J. (1978) *Leisure and Society, 1830-1950*, New York.